

Gorse Action Group
Face-to-Face Meeting
Meeting Notes
November 23, 2015

Attendees:

Alexis Brickner – Coos Watershed Association
Jim Seeley – Wild Rivers Coast Alliance
Marie Simonds – Wild Rivers Coast Alliance
Hannah McDonald – South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve
Michael Murphy – Coos County Emergency Services
Erin Minster – Curry SWCD
Dustin Williams – Curry SWCD
Don Kendall – Curry Emergency Management Services
Dawn Weekly – Coquille Watershed Association
Robert Franson – CFPA
Steven Jansen – Coos County Assessor
Ken Nice – Bandon Dunes
Jimmy Kagan – Institute for Natural Resources

Grant Writing Update

Alexis submitted the National Fish & Wildlife Pulling Together Initiative grant on October 5, 2015. This grant would provide capacity funds for the Coordinator position through 2017. The funding would also cover a fire resistant plant garden and development of a Cooperative Weed Management Area.

Alexis is working on a proposal to the Oregon State Weed Board in partnership with the Go Native Plant Nursery at Bandon High School and The Wetlands Conservancy. TWC owns a 55 acre parcel south of Bandon (The Mews), off of Beach Loop Road and the managers of the property, Ann and Robin, have been controlling gorse and planting native trees and shrubs. The project is a combination control, education, and restoration project. Robin and Ann have been hosting Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) volunteers for gorse control but need more equipment and plants which is where the OSWB funding would come into play.

Alexis met with Robin and Ann and discussed their long term goals for the property. They would like to see The Mews become a gorse control resource center and tool lending library. They are also interested in creating media such as YouTube videos on the work being implemented at The Mews. Robin is working on her Master's degree in Environmental Communication.

Jim mentioned Eric Mruz who manages the Coquille Point NWR for USFWS. He is working on a control grant for Coquille Point in Bandon. Alexis will work with him on the application.

Mapping Project/Data Collection

Alexis received some funding from WRCA for collecting data in a second pilot area. This pilot area will help with the image analyses and will help guide analysis of the total project area. Alexis plans on collecting the data before the end of the year. Michael Schindel with

The Nature Conservancy has been working with The Institute for Natural Resources which is based at OSU. The INR wrote a grant to WRCA to conduct Random Forest Modeling with the mapping data.

Jimmy Kagan with INR (plant ecologist, botanist) joined by conference call for an update on the Random Forest Modeling. Jimmy says that it is good to know where endangered species are but better to know where they might be. Thus began an exploration of different modeling techniques to determine where endangered plant populations might be. Random Forest modeling stood out as the best. Jimmy explained how Random Forest modeling works using spatial data and an algorithm that would explain where a species would be.

The INR has been using this model on invasive species for about two years in the Columbia basin. WRCA funds will be used to use the known occurrences, create a map of tree and shrub height, add that to the satellite imagery, soils, geology, slope, aspect, etc. Then the model will use the positive training points where we know gorse is, negative points of where gorse won't grow. This will create a map of predictability of where gorse could be. It has been done elsewhere and Jimmy believes it will work for gorse. In the end the model provides two outputs: a map where gorse is and likelihood of it being there. It will also provide an analysis of which explanatory variables are most important (soil, tree height, slope, etc) and this will improve the map.

Jimmy said he has a modeling presentation online for those that are interested (email jkagan@pdx.edu).

Donut Hole/Demonstration Project

Jim, Marie, and Alexis met with folks from Coos County and City of Bandon including Mayor Mary Schamehorn and Commissioner John Sweet. The meeting was to discuss the "donut hole", a group of parcels outside of city limits, undeveloped, and covered in gorse. The group discussed the history of the donut hole and feasibility of a project in the area. The donut hole is 252 acres.

One suggestion is to send out an interest letter to landowners in donut hole that discusses a potential project. Michael Murphy suggested that this letter not come from GAG since it is a political thing.

Jim suggested that we determine if our idea even feasible before we reach out to landowners. If we can get a County-City agreement, then we can open the discussion to donut hole landowners.

In the end, taxes, incentives, money, will be the bottom line for having landowners sign up for control projects.

Hannah stated that our role is to get the ball rolling on gorse control but not to take on a politically charged issue such as annexing and control in the donut hole. We should take a step back and figure out our strategic goals first.

A discussion on early landowner engagement and strategies ensued.

Jim says he has funds in his budget to start a demonstration project immediately. Hannah asked what the goals of this project are. Jim replied that they are to provide positive reinforcement for what we are doing.

Another option for a demonstration project that was discussed in the gorse control on Coquille Point by USFWS.

The group determined that we need a work group that is specific to helping identify a demonstration project. Dawn Weekly has volunteer to help.

Outreach

Alexis presented on the GAG at a public meeting in Bandon on October 28, 2015. A little over 30 citizens showed up and it was a successful meeting. A second meeting will be scheduled for the spring (April/May) to discuss updates with the community.

Strategic Action Plan

The Strategic Action Plan (SAP) committee met on November 17, 2015 to begin discussing the SAP process. The committee includes Carri Piroosko (ODA), Sherri Laier (OR State Parks), and Hannah McDonald (South Slough). The committee reviewed gorse plans from Australia and New Zealand and decided that there was no need to reinvent the wheel. The committee reviewed the mission statement, discussed a vision, and determined 4 main priorities. The committee intends to draft up a plan over the winter and provide a draft for the group to review.

The goal of the SAP is to create a prioritization process for selecting gorse control projects (based on landownership, proximity to population centers, acreage, density of gorse, etc). The mapping project and demonstration project can help inform the tasks in the SAP.

Erin Minster asked if the GAG is interested in containing spread such as Curry County small patches. Curry Co can get funding more easily because they are more isolated patches. Isolated patches that will control spread will be mentioned in the prioritization process.

Hannah suggested that at each meeting/conference call, the group have a brainstorm on different sections of the SAP.

Looking Ahead to 2016

Alexis wrapped up the meeting by talking about what to expect in the new year. This includes a 2nd public meeting, a draft of the Strategic Action Plan, a demonstration project, and (as of December 4th!) of National Fish & Wildlife Foundation grant to work with (!).

Next Meeting

The group decided not to have a December conference call with the holiday season looming. A Doodle poll will be sent out for a January conference call.

Thank you everyone who attended for your input!